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ABSTRACT

This handbook illustrates the process of alliance building through the experience of the Arlington (Virginia) Adult Learning System (AALS), an alliance of adult education providers in Arlington, Virginia. (The purpose of AALS is to facilitate the assessment, training, counseling, and transitioning of adult learners of English as a Second Language along a continuum from literacy instruction to preparation for job training and/or academic study.) Section 1 gives a rationale for collaborative delivery of educational services. Section 2 describes the skills, knowledge, and techniques required to engage in this kind of service delivery. Focus is on three dimensions of interaction: procedural, behavioral, and problem solving. Section 3 lays out a process for replication. These phases are described: creating a team; needs assessment; vision building; program design; resource acquisition; and implementation, evaluation, and maintenance. Within each appropriate section, a case study of the AALS experience is described. (YLB)

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LINKAGES FOR LEARNING:

A HANDBOOK FOR COLLABORATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

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PREFACE

The Arlington Adult Learning System (AALS) is an alliance of adult education providers in Arlington, Virginia. It was formed through participation in an English Literacy Transition grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The purpose of the alliance was to facilitate the assessment, training, counseling and transitioning of ESL learners along a continuum of learning from literacy instruction to preparation for job training and/or academic study.

The Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP) would like to acknowledge the fine work, cooperation, and talent that was shared by staff of the Arlington Adult Learning System (AALS) Agencies. The AALS consists of:

- The Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP)
- Hogar Hispano
- The Employment Training Center
- Marymount University

This handbook illustrates the process of alliance building through the experience of the Arlington Adult Learning System. This handbook will give the reader a rationale for collaborative delivery of educational services, describe the knowledge, skills, and techniques required to engage in this kind of service delivery, and lay out a process for replication. Within each appropriate section, a case study of the AALS experience will be described.

Spring, 1995

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RATIONALE

Why should we collaborate?

Today, more and more adult education and training agencies recognize that interdependence is not only healthy, but it is necessary. In fact, many agencies are forming alliances, collaborations, and partnerships for program survival and for enhancement of services. They recognize that no program can afford to be a "stand alone" program and expect to survive. Calls for education and training reform are also putting new pressures on programs to produce results at the lowest possible cost and forcing them to begin considering education as an enterprise.

As more programs begin to understand the implications of operating as an enterprise, they will be better prepared to enter a "free market" era of program delivery where they will experience increased competition for scarce resources and find that they need to sell services to a variety of consumers. In the very near future, a program's "consumer market" will not be limited to the clients themselves. These clients may be presenting vouchers for services. These vouchers will come from social service agencies and employment programs and

other new governance structures responsible for adult education and training in a community. Consequently, ESL programs may find that they will have to actively solicit business from these agencies who will need high quality services for their clients.

In order to survive and to thrive in this new environment, ESL programs will therefore, have to be very clear about their services. They will not be able to be all things to all people. They will, therefore, need to carve out a "market niche" and forge alliances with other providers to deliver services that fall outside that niche. Not unlike healthcare reform, alliances of educational service providers will need to collaborate to sell or market themselves as a package of "preferred providers" that can produce desired outcomes.

In addition to these strong market pressures, collaborative activities are also being encouraged through funding regulations within both the public realm and the private realm. For example, the National Workplace Literacy Initiative requires partnerships between business and educators. Even Start funding requires collaborations between social service agencies, child development service providers, and adult educators. And certainly, the movement to eliminate categorical funding and create block grants to states will force a number of diverse agencies to work together in collaboration. In fact, some states have already

required that localities submit a comprehensive plan for adult education services. This plan must demonstrate that all relevant stakeholders have studied the needs of the target population and have come to consensus on how and by whom the population will be served. Trends for collaboration are also evident among private sector funders. Levi Straus and the Toyota Foundation, among many others, encourage collaborations in the workplace literacy and family literacy projects that they fund.

While these trends certainly promote collaboration, buy-in from providers is critical. Both service providers as well as the policy makers must recognize the necessity for collaboration and that successful alliances do not happen magically. They are difficult to establish and require specialized skills, knowledge, and techniques to maintain. Adequate time and resources must be devoted to developing these skills.

Case Study: AALS - The Rationale for Collaboration

Adult ESL service delivery in Arlington was very diverse, complex, and often difficult to define. For years, this diversity and complexity had been both a strength and a weakness. The diversity and fluidity had enabled programs to respond to adult learner needs quickly and creatively. Yet, more and more, service providers began to realize that the inability to clearly define program processes and outcomes was inefficient and resulted in duplication of effort as well as gaps in service. This was particularly troubling within a climate of increased demands for accountability to learners and funders.

These factors coupled with the opportunity to apply for a grant which would enable adult ESL education stakeholders in Arlington to reinvent themselves into a well-articulated, integrated, and functioning system of service delivery was the impetus for the AALS collaboration. The system we hoped to define would foster learners' ongoing participation in adult education and training programs. It would assist them in identifying their learning needs and place and transition them through a network of providers whose common goal was to assist the learners to exit the system when they'd achieved their goals. Such a transitional system would link a broad range of service providers into a continuum of learning. Working collaboratively, community-based organizations, local adult education agencies, vocational training programs, and post-secondary training institutions would help learners progress along this continuum, enabling them to achieve their objectives and enhancing their ability to be productive citizens and participants in society.

Could such a system be developed? The Arlington Adult Learning System (AALS) is an English Literacy Transition model designed with these features in mind. Under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP) served as the kingpin in linking ESL service providers in Arlington. The AALS is an alliance of English as a Second Language (ESL) service providers with clearly articulated curricula, transition points, transition criteria, and strategies which bond the agencies together in an effort to better serve the diverse needs of the limited English speaking population. The AALS consists of:

- the local education agency - REEP as the lead agency
- a community based organization - Hogar Hispano
- a vocational training provider - The Employment Training Center
- an institution of higher education - Marymount University

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, TECHNIQUES

What does collaboration really mean?

Successful alliances, partnerships, or collaborations are not unlike successful teams. Hay Management Consultants of Arlington, Virginia defines teams in this way:

A team is a closely knit group of people who:

- ***share a joint identification***
- ***share common goals and objectives***
- ***are independent and recognize the need for contributions of all team members to achieve quality results*** [1]

The Hay Group suggest that in order to form good teams, each player must possess knowledge, skills, and techniques that they can apply in at least three dimensions of interaction: **procedural, behavioral,** and **problem-solving**. For example, in the **procedural** area, participants must understand how to:

- charter or establish a purpose for the group,
- establish groundrules for interaction and decision making, and
- deal with content issues versus process issues.

[1] The following references to the Hay Group were adapted from Arlington County Facilitator Training Workshop Manual, June, 1994, Hay Management Consultants, Arlington, Virginia.

In the area of **behavioral** interactions, alliance members will need to learn the dynamics of building as well as maintaining a team. For example, team members will need to learn and understand such factors as:

- stages of team development as well as the pitfalls of each stage,
- team dynamics and "meeting dynamics",
- the roles of meeting participants, and
- how leadership, individuality, team norms, and group cohesiveness influences team performance.

Finally, in the area of **problem solving**, team members will need to both understand and use techniques such as brainstorming, force-field analysis, cause and effect charts, etc. They will also need to learn such skills as:

- how to communicate so they can be heard,
- how to control disruptive behavior,
- how to foster "group think", and
- how to promote consensus in decision making.

Additionally, The Hay Group suggest that each player become aware that they will use their knowledge, skills and techniques at three levels:

- *The personal level - "What's in it for me?",*
- *The interpersonal level - "What's in it for us?", and*
- *The team level - "How do I move the team forward?".*

The following model illustrates the knowledge, skills and techniques that the Hay Group believes are required for successful team formation and operation.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND TECHNIQUES

PROCEDURAL

- type of meetings
- core values/ground rules
- charter
- meeting management procedural rules, agenda, physical setup, evaluation,etc.
- process roles: facilitator, recorder, time keeper
- setting climate
- large group design issues
- content vs. process

PROBLEM-SOLVING

- generic approaches
- techniques appropriate in each step/phase
- bringing creativity into problem-solving

BEHAVIORAL

- communicating
- problem situations
- common disruptive behaviors

♦ Personal Level ♦ Interpersonal Level ♦ Team Level ♦ [2]

[1] Adapted from Arlington County Facilitator Training Workshop Manual, June, 1994 Hay Management Consultants, Arlington, Va.

Case Study: AALS - Knowledge, Skills and Techniques

Along with an understanding of basic team interaction models, The AALS strongly recommends that groups about to embark on alliance building invest in team building training and/or facilitator training. At the very least, the group should bring in an outside facilitator to help with the foundation meetings. Once equipped with a good facilitator and armed with the knowledge, skills, and techniques that are essential for good team formation and operation, interaction through the process of alliance building can be facilitated.

However, staff AALS did not have the benefits of pre-training in the skills, knowledge, and techniques described in this section. Program staff from the provider agencies had limited knowledge and exposure to these areas with varying degrees of experience in applying them to collaborations. Our skills ranged from fairly expert to novice. In retrospect, it would have been best to have everyone start off on the same footing.

The AALS outside evaluator often served in the critical role of facilitator, particularly in the early stages of the AALS formation.

THE PROCESS

How can we collaborate?

While there isn't a magic formula for forming alliances, there are some common elements to be found among successful ones. These elements include results-minded people willing to engage in the following typical phases:

Creating a team - The identification of programs, individuals, and institutions that have a shared interest in solving specific education or training needs of a community.

Needs Assessment - The identification of problems in the community that should be addressed and a determination of why they exist.

Vision Building - The creation of a common mission or vision for how the problems can be addressed.

Program Design - The commitment to shared responsibility for creating solutions, involving both individual commitment and collaborative actions.

Resource Acquisition - Identification of resources that can be brought to bear on the problem.

Implementation, Evaluation, and Maintenance - The decision to act in concert towards achieving common goals.

These phases are further described in this section. How the AALS engaged in them is described in the case study sections.

Creating the Team

Who's responsible? Who's interested?

Clearly, the first step in developing an alliance for education is the identification of individuals, programs, or interest groups who are willing to share the responsibility for meeting the education and training needs of the community. One way to identify such individuals is to sponsor a public forum to discuss adult education and training in your community. Among the wide and diverse agencies and individuals that may be concerned with this issue are: local education agencies, job training programs, community based organizations, community colleges, county extension services, church, ethnic or volunteer groups, state employment offices, and private individuals from the community or the target population. At this forum, programs should openly discuss the forces that are moving them toward collaboration and the forces that may be restraining their efforts. They can determine whether the restraining forces can be overcome in order to better serve the adult learner. From these discussions, a smaller and more committed group of individuals will emerge who will share the desire to work together in an alliance. This group will need to begin the difficult task of creating a climate of trust and cooperation that can lead to mutual decision making and successful implementation. The case study on the following page describes the AALS alliance members and the forces that were compelling as well as the forces that were restraining collaboration.

Case Study: Arlington Adult Learning System (AALS) Alliance Partners

The Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP) took the lead in bringing together ESL service providers in Arlington to study the needs of limited English proficient speakers (LEPS) and the service delivery system as it existed. Frankly, the initial and primary force that brought the group together was the need to plan for a grant application. Prior to the grant application process, the forces that restrained the agencies from collaborating were typical of what may be found in other areas. The programs were too busy to engage in planning and delivering services together, there were turf issues, there were misperceptions about each others' programs, there were false assumptions about the degree of collaboration that actually existed, and the programs were sometimes in competition with each other. However, in preparation for a grant application, REEP coordinated needs assessment efforts with the intent of creating a unified service delivery system. As the group progressed, they found that there were more compelling reasons for collaborating than just the grant application. For example, several felt that the curriculum offered by their individual programs was not comprehensive enough to meet the wide range of learning needs of their students, all of the programs were facing a period of ambiguity and funding instability, all wanted to get a better understanding of factors that would impact future service delivery, and all wanted to become more dynamic organizations that better addressed the needs of their learners. The group felt that creating linkages among their organizations would assist them with these needs. REEP then took the lead in joining a community based education provider, an adult education program, a vocational education provider, and an institution of higher education into an educational alliance. The system that resulted is called the Arlington Adult Learning System (AALS) and includes the following agencies:

Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP): a special project within the Department of Adult Education, Arlington Public Schools (APS) that serves approximately 2,500 LEP immigrant and refugees per year through a variety of program components: Intensive ESL Program, Adult Learning Center (ALC), Workplace Literacy Program, and Non-Intensive Extension Program. REEP is funded exclusively through grants and special projects, such as the National English Literacy Transition Project. Students who are not eligible for categorical funding pay a county supported tuition.

Hogar Hispano: a community based organization under the auspices of Catholic Charities that serves the social, economic, educational, and family needs of low-income immigrants in a number of ways: assistance with immigration, emergency assistance with food and clothing, referrals and job information, and tax preparation. Hogar Hispano also offers 4 levels of low-cost, non-intensive basic ESL instruction at 9 locations in Northern Virginia.

Employment Training Center (ETC): an adult education program of the Arlington Public School that offers native and non-native adults free vocational training and job placement in the fields of office skills, child care, electrical trades, and printing. ETC is supported by a number of different funding sources, including JTPA, JOBS, and BVOT. ETC is the primary vocational training provider in Arlington County.

Marymount University: an independent, comprehensive, coeducational university in the liberal arts tradition that has an intensive English as a Second Language Program with four levels of instruction that prepare foreign students for academic study at US universities. At the upper levels, qualified students may begin combining academic instruction with their ESL instruction.

Needs Assessment

What's not working and why?

Once an initial team of providers decides to work together toward a common goal, their first order of business will be a thorough needs assessment. The needs assessment phase requires an identification of the problems in the community that should be addressed and an understanding of why they exist. During this phase, providers are generally still participating at the individual or *personal level;* they are not quite sure what the benefits of collaboration or forming an alliance can be. They're still wondering "what's in it for me or my program?" Understanding group dynamics and establishing behavioral and procedural groundrules can facilitate an honest evaluation of the service delivery system and the problems, both real and perceived, that need to be addressed. This understanding will be critical to transitioning team members from the *personal level* to the *interpersonal level* where they will gain an understanding of "what's in it for us".

Providers interested in working with other agencies to create a system with a logical and well articulated flow of services among ESL and literacy providers must ask themselves very hard questions, and they must be willing to face some unpleasant answers. For example, while examining the ESL service delivery

system of a community, they may find a wide range of problems including poor attendance among ESL students, weak completion rates, watered down services, gaps between where one program ends and another begins, turf issues, categorical funding limitations, lack of available services, concentration of services in one geographical area or at one level of service delivery, lack of communication among providers, lack of understanding of program requirements, and much more.

A good meeting facilitator, however, can help develop good team building procedures. A good facilitator can also help safeguard the integrity of the needs assessment process by helping the team members abide by procedural and behavioral groundrules. A good facilitator can carefully guide the needs assessment process and enable providers to develop the skills, knowledge, and techniques needed to examine and openly discuss learner, institution, and systems barriers. This broadened perspective will enable the stakeholders to question why the service delivery problems or conditions exist and to begin to build a new vision for service delivery so that they can get to the *team level* and begin to consider how working together toward one common goal "can move the team forward."

The following are some examples of groundrules that an alliance may agree to:

- *The group will have a clear mission for the alliance.*
- *The group will establish clear authority or leadership functions.*
- *There will be clear tasks and responsibilities.*
- *The group agrees to address the political aspects of the collaboration.*
- *There will be enough time for the group to form, storm, and norm before expecting them to perform.*
- *The group will develop team norms for internal operations, such as meeting procedures and behaviors, decision making and consensus.*
- *The group will deal with conflict and feelings openly.*
- *The group agrees to foster team success vs individual victories.*
- *The group establishes good communication mechanisms for all.* [3]

In addition to procedural and behavioral issues, the needs assessment process can pose overwhelming logistical challenges such as producing volumes of data and information that may be unmanageable. However, an analytic approach to the needs assessment process can prevent this. In the example of the AALS case study, the goal was to create an ESL system that transitions learners from literacy level on through to vocational training and/or academic instruction. AALS stakeholders examined the problems and collected data on three levels: **Learner Related Barriers, Institutional Barriers,** and **Systemic Barriers.** This analysis helped provide structure to the program design phase as well.

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[3]. Adapted from: The Hay Group, Facilitator Training Workshop, June 1994, Arlington, VA.

Case Study: AALS Needs Assessment Questions

Learner Related Barriers

What is keeping learners from transitioning from literacy and ESL to vocational or academically focused programs?

Do the learners live in linguistically isolated communities?

Do they lack transportation or information about services?

Can they deal with the complex application processes of the individual providers?

Are the ESL learners having trouble making appropriate choices?

Do they have access to education and career counseling so they can develop a plan to achieve their goals?

Do the learners lack the basic education and language skills needed to go on for vocational or academic training?

Do they become frustrated by general or survival ESL programs that do not seem to help them achieve their goals?

Institutional Barriers

What is significant or unique about our individual institutions that may inhibit transition or prohibit the creation of a better articulated system of service delivery?

Are there turf issues, differing program philosophies or methodologies, conflicting fiscal and program calendars?

Are there admission requirements tied to categorical funding policies? Are there residency requirements, standardized test requirements, etc.?

Systemic Barriers

What do we know about our "system" itself?

Who are the service providers?

How are they managed?

What is their capacity?

Are the programs operated by volunteer agencies, church and community sponsored programs, local adult education programs, JTPA programs, community colleges, or workplace sponsored programs?

Are the programs managed by full-time or part-time staff?

Is there an incentive for these diverse programs to "collaborate" as opposed to "cooperate"?

Are the programs willing to engage in activities that require far more communication, commitment, and system building than simple cooperative agreements may have been required in the past?

How can programs make time for long range strategic planning and implementation with other critical agencies?

How can "collaboration" produce long lasting systemic solutions?

Vision Building

In the best of all possible worlds, what would we want to achieve?

What can be recreated, restructured, or reorganized to achieve it?

With a clear assessment of what has not been working and an understanding of what can be changed, the alliance members can begin to form and develop cohesion as a team, and they will find that they can examine issues on an *interdependency level*. During the vision building phase, alliance members can begin to participate in the creation of a common mission or vision for how the barriers that were identified during needs assessment can be impacted. During this phase, stakeholders will need to look inwardly to examine their own individual missions and determine whether they can collectively achieve what cannot be achieved independently. This phase also requires an examination of the values and philosophies that will be involved. This is a critical phase because it requires bringing expectations, values, and philosophies into congruence.

While this vision building phase enables providers to think about the possibilities, they must also come to terms with the realities. This is when the previously established groundrules will really become handy as collaborators move into the program design phase.

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At the vision building phase, it is important to articulate what you want to happen during each step in a learner's encounter with your system and what will be required to ensure that this happens for him/her. It may also be useful to actually create a picture of what the current system looks like and to examine it from the learner's perspective. Then, draw a picture of what it should look like. The AALS case study on the following pages illustrates these steps.

CASE STUDY: AALS

DESIGNING LEARNER SERVICES WORKSHEET [4]

Program Component	What do you want to be sure happens to the learner during	How do we ensure that it happens? What does it look like?
Learner Recruitment		
Learner Reception		
Learner Assessment		
Instructional Planning		
Learning Orientation		
Learner Integration into the Classroom		
Learning Management		
Evaluation of Learning		

[4]. Adapted from worksheet presented by Dr. Lennox McLendon, June, 1995

Case Study: AALS - Creating the Vision

In the development of the AALS, our common mission was to create a comprehensive transitional program that linked the resources and enhanced the expertise of a broad and diverse range of providers into a well articulated system designed to meet the wide range of ESL learning needs. The unifying element among all of our individual program philosophies was a belief in learner empowerment. Hence, our need for a well articulated system was strongly influenced by the need to also enable the learner to articulate his/her own goals and educational choices within the educational delivery structure.

Figure 1.

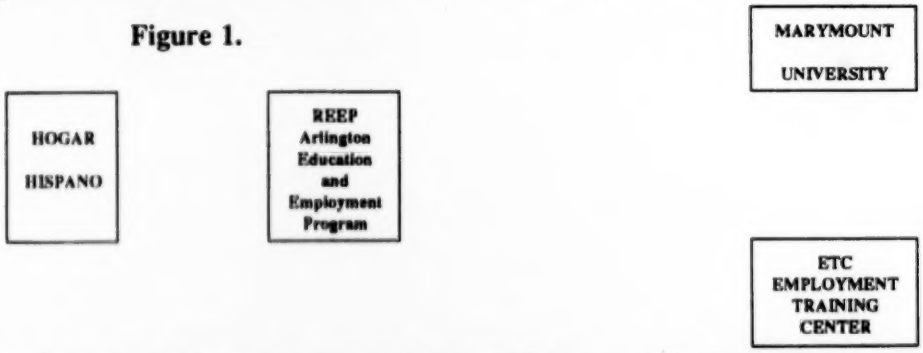
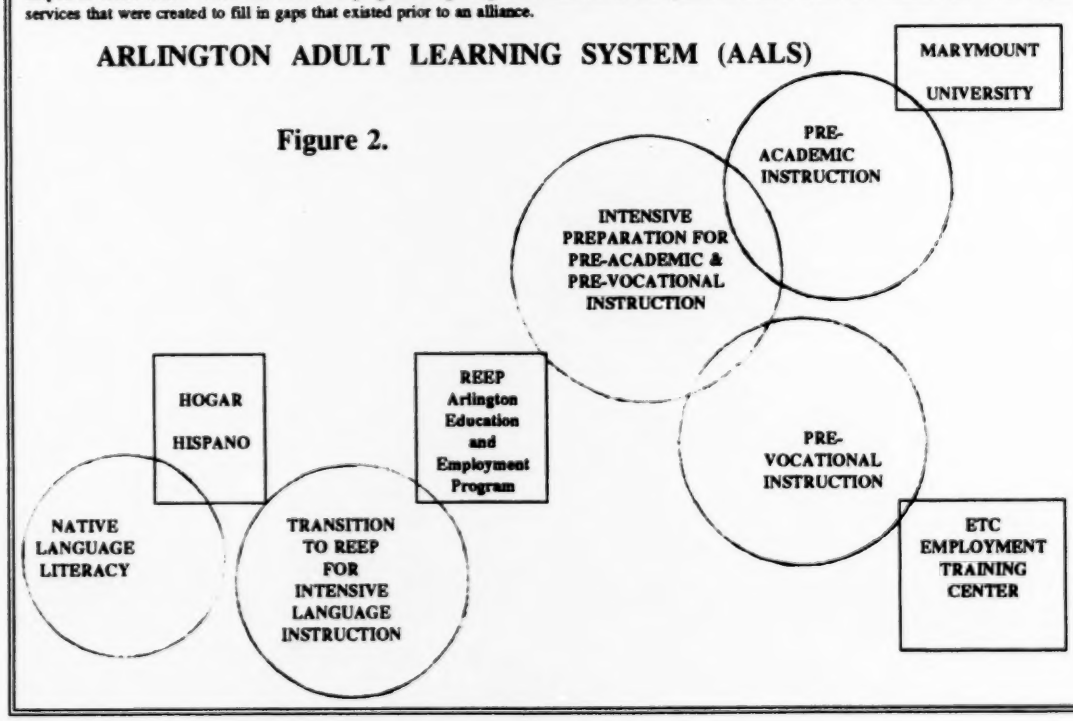


Figure 1 above illustrates the ESL service delivery system in Arlington before the providers worked in alliance to form the Arlington Adult Learning System. While each agency was in existence prior to the formation of the AALS, each program operated independently with loosely held cooperative arrangements among some of the providers. There was no central intake system, no articulation between programs, and no real understanding of each program's services, or eligibility requirements and admission procedures. In addition, there were gaps between where one service provider left off and the other began. From a learner's perspective, they may or may not have known about the many different programs available, and they certainly would have had difficulty knowing what steps might be necessary for them to achieve their goals. How could such a disjointed system empower learners?

The illustration of the gaps in our system enabled us to formulate a new vision, one which reinvented our individual programs into a learning continuum in which learners could enter the system at any point, be assessed, counseled and placed appropriately, and transition from level to level or provider to provider until the learners achieved their goals. We then began to brainstorm strategies for implementing the vision. What would need to change or stay the same? How would the change be accomplished? What were the trade offs? What resources did we have? What resources would we need? Would the design require a shift in program responsibilities? Could common assessment methods, instruments or criteria be developed? Could referral processes be streamlined? Could such program functions as outreach, staff development, fund raising be conducted jointly? These questions helped us create a new vision and fueled our program design. Figure 2 shows the AALS system as a result of the new alliance. The circles represent services that were created to fill in gaps that existed prior to an alliance.

ARLINGTON ADULT LEARNING SYSTEM (AALS)

Figure 2.



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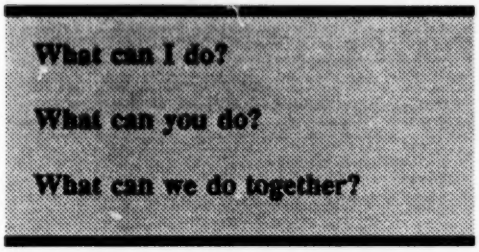
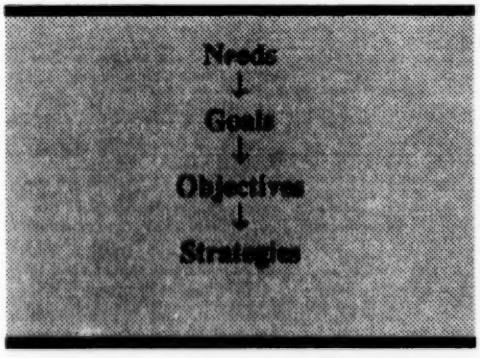
Program Design



If the first two phases have been successful, alliance members can begin to function as a *team*. By this point, a well-functioning alliance will find itself with a good procedural and behavioral framework for interaction, a well-established mission and philosophy, an understanding of the educational needs of the target community, and a desire for collaborative action toward a common vision.



The program design phase will test true commitment to shared responsibility for creating solutions. This phase involves both individual commitment and collaborative actions. In other words, what can institutions do individually, and what steps need to be taken together to solve the problems? The program design phase involves turning needs statements into articulated goals, refining goals into achievable objectives, and operationalizing the objectives through innovative strategies and realistic timelines.

An alliance's goal during this phase should be to create solutions that will achieve long term results that will be supported by all providers. During this phase, each provider also has the opportunity to determine their contributions and participation at the three levels of interaction discussed earlier: **the personal or program level, the interpersonal level, and the team level.**

The AALS experience documented on the following pages illustrates:

- The AALS Design Plan,
- The Goals and Objectives of the AALS, and
- The Scope of Instruction that would be created to operationalize the plan.

The Case Studies on the following pages describe:

- The AALS design Plan for Long Term Results,
- The Goals and Objectives of the AALS, and
- The Scope of Instruction for the AALS curriculum designed to operationalize the AALS objectives.

Case Study: AALS- Designing Long Term Solutions

In the case of the AALS, the general goal was to facilitate access to ESL instruction, job training, and higher education. In order to operationalize this goal, the AALS wanted to design and implement a service delivery model which would enable limited English speaking adults to successfully transition from one program level to the next and one program provider to the next as appropriate to their goals, aptitudes, and interests. Based on the needs assessment phase and the vision building phases of the project, the AALS determined that in order to achieve its goal, it needed:

- To create a comprehensive, integrated transitional curriculum for ESL service delivery.
- To design strategies that would break down learner barriers as well as institutional and systems barriers to transition.

With the help of the AALS's external evaluator, Dr. Heide Spruck Wrigley, the AALS determined that the learners basically fell along two continua:

1) a continuum of familiarity with the U.S. culture - This ranged from students who were linguistically isolated to those with greater familiarity with and experience negotiating the English speaking environment, and

2) a continuum of academic experience - This ranged from 0 years in native country to highly educated from home country.

The AALS members designed and developed a comprehensive curriculum for these learners. The curriculum enabled learners at the provider agencies to make progress in a variety of areas, consistent with each individual learner's language learning needs, level, and goals. It was felt that a curriculum could serve as a main component for an infrastructure that could last beyond the life of the grant. Therefore, a shared curriculum served as a basis for both initial articulation between programs and a means for continued linkage.

In addition to the wide range of difference among the learner populations, the AALS members also found wide differences among themselves as service providers. There were differences in program structure, staffing, and experience with collaborations. The AALS developed a number of structures and strategies that addressed the language and literacy needs of the students as well as the coordination, expansion, and development needs of the individual institutions, and the construction of the system.

The charts on the following pages describe: 1) The AALS partners' needs, project objectives designed to address the needs, and the program strategies that would enable achievement of the objectives, and 2) The Comprehensive AALS Curriculum.

Case Study: AALS Program Design

GOAL: TO FACILITATE ACCESS TO ESL, JOB TRAINING AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Specific Needs To Be Addressed	Objective	Strategies to meet specific LEP needs
• Lack of coordination among providers • Lack of assessment methods for placement along the continuum of learning • Lack of assessment methods for determining readiness to transition from one program to another	Enhance program coordination	• Form partnership which will design a transitional Literacy Delivery System that will be linked by common assessments and curriculum coordination • Develop a transitional curriculum drawn on and added to by each provider • Increase and improve use of educational technology in each of the programs • Develop articulated agreements between agencies • Develop more flexible and coordinated scheduling of services
• Lack of language skills needed for job skills training or academic study • Illiteracy in native language and/or English • Lack of information on "next level of services" • Need for improved access to "the next step" • Lack of self confidence	Expand and extend access to English Language Proficiency	• Provide ESL instruction along a continuum from literacy level to preparation for vocational training and academic study • Provide native language literacy, English literacy • Develop transition points and assessment criteria • Provide counseling at each step • Provide resources for each provider to offer training slots for participants of this project
• Unemployment and underemployment	Enhance opportunities for employment	• Provide Vocational English as a Second Language training in four job areas: child care training, electrical trades, office skills, and printing • Provide workplace literacy assistance in learning centers to trainees who are working or are in job search or waiting for job training

Case Study: Scope of Instruction: AALS Curriculum

Learner Goal Areas	Learner Goals: Consistent with their language learning needs and goals, learners will:	Curriculum Features designed to enable learners' to achieve goals
Skills/ competencies	• Increase skills in English in order to achieve language learning goals • Acquire the competencies and language skills needed for transition from level to level and provider to provider • Acquire the competencies and language skills needed for job training • Acquire the competencies, language skills, and academic skills needed for academic study	• Multiple levels of ESL instruction, ranging from pre-literacy to preparation for academic and vocational study • Goals translated into specific performance objectives • Clearly articulated entry and exit descriptions of student performance levels that facilitate transition from one level to another and one provider to another
Learner Strategies	• Increase strategies for being better learners, eg. asking for clarification, management of time and materials, understanding policies and procedures, following instructions • Develop strategies for attaining language learning goals • Develop strategies for attaining long-term education and employment goals • Increase academic skills, such as note taking, test taking	• Goals translated into specific performance objectives • Intensive pre-vocational/pre-academic track • Individualized pre-vocational/pre-academic study • Individual Education Plans
Goal Setting	• Be able to express their language learning needs and goals • Be able to express and evaluate their long-term educational and employment goals • Identify areas of strengths, weaknesses, and progress	• Needs assessment integral to curriculum design and implementation • Individualized Education Plan
Knowledge of higher education and training options	• Gain knowledge of job training and academic opportunities, including application process and eligibility requirements • Gain knowledge of financial aid options for academic study, including application process and eligibility requirements	• Goals translated into specific performance objectives • Intensive pre-vocational/pre-academic track • Individualized pre- vocational & pre-academic study • Individual Education Plans

Resource Acquisition

What is each agency bringing to the table?

What's missing?

How can it be acquired/sustained?

This phase requires identification of resources that can be brought to bear on the problems identified by the alliance. This is a critical phase which requires a look at both the short-term and the long-term costs and benefits of the project. Each education and training provider should examine what resources they can bring to the strategies that are planned and what resources will be needed to sustain them. Often the costs and benefits of collaboration are difficult for the educators to articulate, and initially it may seem that it will cost more to collaborate than to work independently. There will be numerous meetings to attend, data to collect and analyze, and hurdles to overcome during brainstorming sessions. However, if initial needs assessment and vision building have been successful and the alliance uses its goals and objectives as a means of driving the resource discussions, very meaningful and lasting strategies can be developed. Unfortunately, as is usually the case, agencies may be engaged in the collaboration process simply as an exercise to win a grant. If this is the case, they are only viewing alliance building as a means to an end and not as a long term strategy for system building and implementation. On the otherhand, with the right perspectives, the grant application process can provide a positive impetus for collaboration.

In the case of the AALS, while the alliance building was initiated during the grant planning process, strategies to strengthen and develop a permanent infrastructure for the alliance were built into the project. As a result, the providers involved in the AALS are now able to maintain many of the transition strategies that were designed for learners, they are able to use curricula developed under the grant, share staff development resources, jointly seek funding that supports the needs of the alliance as a whole as well as its individual parts, and expand and extend ESL services to the learners in the community.

The chart on the following page illustrates what each stakeholder brought to the project, what was missing for the AALS, and how it could be acquired and maintained beyond the life of the grant.

Case Study: AALS Resource Acquisition

	What is each bringing to the table?	What's missing?	How can it be acquired?	How can it be maintained?
Hogar Hispano (HH)	• Church sponsorship • Social service support • Access to and rapport with low income & low literacy population • Space • Free non-intensive instruction • Volunteer teachers	• Curriculum • Program coordination & transition strategies to adult school and intensive instruction • Training & support for staff • Stable operating platform	Develop one &/or adapt REEP's curriculum Transition grant funds REEP as a staff development resource	• Continue to use curriculum developed under grant • Continue coordination with REEP to transition learners under other special funding • Continue to access REEP's staff development • Additional resources
REEP	• Public School sponsorship • Curriculum and assessment expertise • 8 level lifeskills curriculum • Teacher training & Support • Paid professional instructors • Computer and technology experience • Space • County supported funding for limited scholarships to students • Low-cost, tuition funded classes • Assessment experience with BEST Test	• Outreach to low income/low literacy population • Bridge class to pre-vocational and pre-academic instruction • Transition points to vocational training and academic training • Case management and academic counseling • Free ESL slots for learners transitioned from CBO • ESL & study skills for vocational and academic training	Coordinate and establish systems with HH. Develop curriculum Develop shared transition strategies Transition Grant funds	• Continue outreach to HH students • Continue to use new curriculum • Continue to use transition strategies • Seek additional funding as an alliance • Set aside scholarships to REEP for HH students and those transitioning to ETC
ETC	• Public School sponsorship • VESL • 4 vocational training programs • Assessment experience with TABE test • Case Management experience	• Transition strategies • Transition criteria	Coordinate with REEP & HH Develop and implement training - Transition grant	• Continue with established strategies • Seek joint funding
Marymount University	• Higher Ed ESL • Transportation • Academic counseling and information • Assessment experience with TOEFL and Michigan Test	• Outreach to immigrant and refugee population • Transition strategies and criteria • Low-cost tuition	• Coordinate with REEP • Develop transition strategies and criteria • Offer free classes through Transition grant	• Seek joint funding

Implementation & Evaluation

Taking action and reflection

This phase involves the decision to act in concert towards achieving common goals. This begins the implementation and maintenance phase of the partnership. A successful partnership does not end here, it only begins. In the implementation phase, all partners should maintain open lines of communication, be responsible for carrying out their clearly articulated roles, and be responsible for evaluating the program as well as providing input which will feed back into the program design. A good partnership will be able to maintain itself if the vision remains clear, if the climate for interaction among partners is mutually beneficial, if the process for decision making and conflict resolution is conducted with respect and dignity, and if the partnership is producing the desired results. This kind of partnership is likely to evolve into a lasting relationship that will benefit the community.

If the partnership has been able to clearly articulate its goals and objectives and has agreed upon the strategies to implement the system, then evaluation can be tied directly to the alliance's efforts.

Performance outcomes can be captured by examining each program objective and asking such questions as:

What need is this designed to address and for whom?
What activities are you undertaking?
How will you do a baseline assessment?
What have you accomplished?
What results (impacts) are evident that show you are making a difference in people's lives?
Who documents these results?
What tools are you using to measure impacts?
What progress have you made toward the goal?
What unintended outcomes are there?
How are they being documented? [5]

In the case of the AALS, the alliance was concerned with determining and documenting enhancements to the delivery system by observing learner changes as well as institution and systems changes. The evidence of impact on learners' knowledge, goal setting, skills/competencies, and strategies outlined in the following charts is tracked through a process that begins with outreach and orientation and continues throughout the application process, on-going counseling, classroom instruction, and transitioning from one level to another, from one project provider to another as well as from the AALS into mainstream job training or academic programs. The evaluation of the achievement of these goals is also

[5]. Adapted from material produced by AALS external evaluator, Heide Spruck-Wrigley, Ph.D.

a process that involves the learners themselves, classroom instructors, and a case manager.

For the AALS, the development and implementation of an integrated system has increased awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the populations served by each partner, the services that each partner provides, as well as the admissions and eligibility requirements of each. This has resulted in an enhanced ability to counsel and refer learners to services appropriate to their goals. The project has also enabled the AALS to develop a system of information sharing about learners.

The charts on the following pages outline the areas where the development and implementation of the AALS has resulted in learner changes or institutional change. The goals in each area, activities designed to achieve them, and indicators that change has occurred are also listed.

LEARNER CHANGE CHART

Learner Change Areas	Learner Goals: Consistent with their language learning needs and goals, learners will:	Project Activities designed to enable learners' to achieve goals	Indicators of Change
Knowledge of education and training options	• Gain knowledge of the range of ESL services available • Gain knowledge of job training and academic opportunities, including application process, and eligibility requirements • Gain knowledge of financial aid options for academic study, including application process, and eligibility requirements	• Intensive Outreach Efforts • Project Orientations • Individual and group counseling sessions • Transition Curriculum • Computer resources on employment, education, & financial aid • Guest speakers • Field trips	• **750** recruits attended orientations • **375** learners applied for the project • **289** learners were enrolled in the project • **190** transitions across the system • Approximately **27+** project participants transitioned to non-AALS providers • Achievement of related objectives in the transition curriculum • Learner comments during counseling sessions and on project surveys • **5** project participants gave public talks about their participation in the project
Goal Setting	• Be able to express their language learning needs and goals • Be able to express and evaluate their long -term educational and employment goals • Identify areas of strengths, weaknesses, and progress	• Application essay questions • Transition Curriculum • Individualized Education Plan • Interviews with teachers & counselors • Transition writing samples • Self-assessment activities • Dialogue journals • Project completion surveys • Progress reports (student comment sections)	• Achievement of related goals in the curriculum • **190** transitions across the system • **27+** transitions to non-AALS providers • Learner comments at interviews, in class, and on progress reports & surveys, and writing samples

LEARNER CHANGE CHART

Learner Change Areas	Learner Goals: Consistent with their language learning needs and goals, learners will:	Project Activities designed to enable learners' to achieve goals	Indicators of Change
Skills/ competency	• Increase skills in English in order to achieve language learning goals • Acquire the competencies and language skills needed for transition from level to level • Acquire the competencies and language skills needed for job training • Acquire the competencies, language skills, and academic skills needed for academic study	• Development of entry level descriptions • Multiple levels of ESL instruction (14 levels of instruction ranging from pre -literacy through preparation for vocational and academic study) • Alternate and flexible delivery modes: intensive as well as non-intensive classes, open entry as well as fixed entry offerings, individualized study options, morning, evening and weekend instruction • Transition curriculum • Alternative assessment	• Achievement of project goals • Achievement of objectives set forth in the curriculum for a given level • Course completion data • Promotion/retention data • Achievement of transition criteria from level to level • 190 learners achieved transition criteria and transitioned from provider to provider • Attendance records/hours of instruction graduation • Progress reports • Test data
Learner Strategies	• Develop strategies for attaining language learning goals • Develop strategies for attaining long-term education and employment goals • Increase academic skills, such as note taking, test taking • Increase strategies for being better learners, eg. asking for clarification, management of time and materials, understanding policies and procedures, following instructions	• Transition curriculum (Needs Assessment and Goal Setting/ Pre-vocational/pre -academic Track at REEP, ETC, MU) • Individual and Group counseling • Individual Education Plans • Test taking practice • Field trips • Guest speakers • Learning logs • Dialogue journals • Project Surveys	• Progress reports • Achievement of related objectives in transition curriculum • Test data • Surveys and interviews

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE CHART

Institutional Change Areas	Institutional Goals: Institutions will	Project Activities designed to achieve institutional goals	Indicators of Change
Knowledge of other service providers	• Gain knowledge of partner programs (learner profile, services offered, admissions and eligibility requirements) • Gain knowledge of non-partner programs	•Board meetings •Site visits • Class observations •Observations of testing and registration procedures • Joint orientation sessions • Joint interviewing of applicants • Joint curriculum development	• Number of referrals among partners • Success of learners referred • Number of referrals to non-partner agencies
Knowledge of Learner Population	• Increase knowledge of the needs of the LEP adult in Arlington	• Needs assessment: has become an integral part of intake and curriculum implementation • Information sharing system among partner • Transition classes	• Number of referrals among partners • Success of learners referred • Number of referrals to non-partner agencies
Ability to respond to student needs	• Tailor instruction to learner needs • Increase ability to effectively counsel and refer learners	• Transition curriculum • Transition assessment system • Joint development of new courses • Counseling component • Integration of needs assessment	• Number of referrals among partners • Success of learners referred • Number of referrals to non-partner programs

CONCLUSION

The experience of the Arlington Adult Learning System (AALS) in developing and implementing an alliance has been a successful one. The AALS alliance is an ongoing collaboration. The initial process supported by the grant enabled the partners to identify mutual concerns and the resources needed to address them as well as to develop mutually beneficial solutions. The experience of the AALS demonstrates that the challenges of collaboration can be overcome with the right motivation, the right mix of partners willing to set aside turf issues and the support required to help the alliance members build the skills, knowledge, and attitude necessary to implement real systemic changes. Today, there are information, referral, curricular and assessment mechanisms in place which continue to link the transitions of learners through the continuum of learning represented by each AALS agency from basic literacy instruction at community-based organizations on through to the college level system.